

February 28, 2023

Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC) Statement on British Columbia's 2023 Budget

The Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC) congratulates Premier David Eby and Finance Minister Katrine Conroy on their first budget for British Columbia. Unfortunately, the budget was a missed opportunity to counter contraband tobacco and its significant impact on BC communities.

“Convenience stores play an essential role in communities across the province. Too many of them are closing, largely due to government inaction on contraband tobacco. While CICC welcomes the absence of new or increased taxes in this year’s budget, it won’t be enough to address the impact of organized crime on contraband,” noted Sara MacIntyre, CICC’s Vice-President for Western Canada.

“Store owners are also reporting nearly 40% reduction in legal tobacco sales. The massive proliferation of contraband tobacco across the province is not only a massive illegal industry that costs the government millions in lost tax revenues and affects the viability of the corner store, but it also threatens community safety. The increased resources for RCMP officers to improve community safety is a good first step. But the 2023 budget should have dedicated resources to a contraband tobacco task force.”

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services Budget Consultation Report also recommended additional resources and enforcement to address the distribution of contraband tobacco and cannabis.

“Failure to control contraband tobacco strikes at the province’s tobacco control strategy. Contraband makes tobacco cheap, thwarting public health objectives and reducing tax dollars. We are asking the Premier and Minister Farnworth to establish a dedicated contraband tobacco unit. It will help keep communities safe and convenience stores open,” concluded MacIntyre.

The CICC is a national, not-for-profit association uniting retailers, manufacturers and distributors in the convenience industry who employ more than 212,000 Canadians and sell more than \$55 billion annually in goods and services. In British Columbia, the CICC represents more than 2,300 stores and employ more than 19,000 British Columbians and thousands more indirectly.

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